DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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VOL. 5 (7) Forty-eighth Issue 1945 PUBLISHED BY FILM CENTRE, 34 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON W.1 ONE SHILLING

THE FUTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL FILM

THERE is a dismal future for educational films in schools in this country unless the Ministry of Education assumes direct responsibilities, administrative and financial, in the supply of films and equipment. Before the war the Board went no farther than recognising expenditure by local authorities on films and equipment as ranking for grant. It relied, almost entirely, on the British Film Institute to persuade the local authorities to buy equipment and use films. It hoped that a demand would thus arise which would encourage commercial companies, at their own financial risk, to make educational films and that the films made would be the films needed. One commercial company notably, and a few others to a less extent, made a large number of films and spent a great deal of money on them and on campaigns to sell equipment and the films. Yet the real progress made was negligible. Very few local education authorities gave support. A few schools took advantage of some of the first-class films that were made whilst some teachers decided that the films made were of no use to them and the majority, lacking guidance or the stimulus of a co-ordinated plan, remained apathetic. The commercial company concerned did not cover its outlay let alone make a profit and practically stopped production, and others studying its experience saw no reason to believe that they would succeed commercially where it had not succeeded. To-day again, as during the last twenty years, discussion of educational films in schools still comes back to talk about the vicious circle: schools are not pressing for projectors because they cannot find enough suitable films, and commercial companies will not make the films because they do not believe a market exists in making films specifically for schools.

The Ministry of Education cannot—and it would be disastrous if it could and tried to—force films or any other visual aids on schools. But if it really believes in their value it is its duty to enable all schools wanting them to get good films and equipment. This it could do by itself undertaking and financing the production of educational films.

Subsidies?

No one has operated or advanced any scheme for educational film production which does not involve subsidies of some kind. The question is not, must educational film production be subsidised, but what form of subsidy will give the best results? Amateur film production by teachers is subsidised to the extent of the time and energy given by the teachers and not charged against the cost of the films; such films are valuable but the use of films cannot be restricted to the types of films which teachers can make in their spare time with what equipment they can afford to buy out of their own pockets. Some industrial concerns have produced and will continue to produce excellent educational films but the choice of films to be made by them must in the last resort be conditioned, quite properly, by their own interests as industries. Production by commercial film companies which must cover their costs has, as a matter of bitter experience, proved impossible. Attempts have been made by commercial companies to subsidise educational film production by the sale of projection equipment; this increases the cost of the equipment to the local authorities who in consequence spend less on hiring or buying films. Others have tried to make ends meet by producing films on such subjects and in such a style as would, it was hoped, be acceptable both to the commercial cinemas and to the schools; such films have satisfied neither and have done great harm both to the showing of educational films in cinemas and to the use of films in schools. Most recently a scheme has been advanced whereby local education authorities would guarantee to buy copies of a number of films in advance of production, at prices far above laboratory printing rates. This would give the production company a guaranteed income against expenditure. It would enable it to try out films on paper and abandon production if the response was poor; it would also lead to the tailoring of films according to the income to be derived from the sale of copies. Local authorities should not, and we imagine in fact would not, indulge in blind purchases of this kind. Moreover, if financial return by the sale of copies was to become the measuring stick by which subjects for films were chosen, then production would be restricted to elementary films acceptable to the largest number of users and important films needed by a small number of users, or films on subjects requiring heavy expenditure would not be made.

Educational Needs

The only satisfactory form of subsidy is that the Ministry of Education should itself produce films. How it would decide what films should be made and by whom, and how it would be judged whether the Ministry was succeeding in making films that were needed, we shall consider later. But the goal is clear. All schools,

(*continued overleaf*)

from primary schools to technical institutes and County Colleges, and all local authorities whether they be large and wealthy or small rural authorities, must be able to get the visual aid material and equipment appropriate and necessary to the teaching of every subject. Educational needs must be the mainspring and the only criterion of educational film production. This can only be achieved if the teachers and the local authorities commission and pay for the production of films. Since they cannot do this individually, except within the limited field of what can be done by amateurs, the Ministry of Education must act on their behalf. We believe that most teachers and local authorities would welcome such action by the Ministry if they felt confident that the Ministry could do the job properly and that users would not, in effect, be forced to accept films when they were bad because they had been produced by the Ministry.

Advisory Council

To ensure that the right films were made the Ministry should appoint an Advisory Council on Visual Aids. To get the films well made the Ministry should commission them through the National Film Office which will, we believe, be established on the lines of the present Films Division of the Ministry of Information to produce films for all Government Departments. The films when made would be offered to local authorities who would decide how many copies, if any, of each film they wished to buy for the use of their schools and who would be able to buy them at cost price of printing plus the normal establishment charges. The films would be available on free loan through local, county and regional libraries linked with a Central Film Library so that any teacher anywhere could get any film, just as he can now get any book through the system of public and county libraries and the National Central Library. Finally, there must be groups of teachers to assist local authorities in the choice of films and to assess by use and discussion the teaching value of the films produced by the Ministry.

Experience in the use of films and other visual aids in schools is confined at present to a few hundred teachers, and is based on a hundred or so films and film strips actually produced for schools. The urgent need is to enlarge the field of experience as quickly as possible even at the cost of mistakes. As films were produced by the Ministry and more schools were equipped with projectors experience would be gained which would necessitate continuous revision of earlier conclusions and recommendations. One of the functions of the Advisory Council on Visual Aids would be to obtain, correlate and assess opinions and recommendations from teachers. In the light of these it would year by year draw up a production programme for the Ministry. The Advisory Council should be appointed by and directly responsible to the Ministry. It should be small and should consist of teachers, both in schools and universities, school inspectors and administrators. The members should be appointed for their experience and knowledge of the use of visual aids and for their professional standing in the field of education; they would not be appointed as representatives of any organisations. The Council would be provided by the Ministry with a permanent expert staff and should also be empowered to commission research by individuals appointed by itself and through the learned and professional bodies. The Council and its staff would therefore be engaged simultaneously and continuously in getting information from teachers and local authorities using films and in drawing up production programmes for the Ministry.

The Advisory Council, being a Council for Visual Aids, and not for films alone would provide in its plans for the production of film strips and films, both sound and silent. The Council would not concern itself with trying to resolve the meaningless controversies of film strip versus films or sound versus silent. Its job would be to discover which types of visual aids are appropriate and valuable to various subjects and in progressive stages of teaching. Year by year the Ministry would inform the Advisory Council what it proposed to spend on production and the Council would provide the Ministry with its production programme.

National Film Office

The programme would be passed by the Ministry to the National Film Office whose job it would be to get the programme carried out. The National Film Office would compare it with the production programmes of other Departments and discuss with the Ministry and other Departments correlations which might be effected and duplication which could be avoided. It is obvious that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture would have common interests in the production of instructional films on farming. Similarly the films which the Colonial Office might wish to make about the Colonies would be substantially the same films as teachers want for schools. More than this the National Film Office should be able, in commissioning films and film strips on behalf of the Ministry of Education as well as for other Departments, to effect more economical, efficient and rapid production for all by using the same companies for subjects related in style, treatment, subject and locale. Films for the Ministry of Education would be commissioned and seen through production by the National Film Office in much the same way as is followed now by the Films Division of the Ministry of Information. Some of the films would be made by the Office's own units but, as now, most of them would be commissioned from outside companies under contracts covering actual costs of production and an agreed sum for overheads and profits. Effective collaboration between the appropriate specialists and the film companies would also be the responsibility of the National Film Office and should present no problems which have not been faced and overcome during the past five years. For each subject the Ministry of Education, acting on the advice of its Advisory Council, would nominate a teacher or a specialist in the subject (or both) who would work with the film company, through the National Film Office, at all appropriate stages from the first treatment to the finished film; and they would be paid for the work they did. There must be no attempt to produce films by committee. It is a fallacy to suppose that by using committees, however representative, films can be made that will offend no one and be accepted by all. Indeed, the attempt to produce such films would stultify both film production and education. It may well be that some of the films when they are produced will commend themselves to few teachers and few local authorities. Such failures will be as important to development as the successful films.

Libraries

As each film and film strip or series of either is finished, copies would be made available for pre-viewing, and local authorities would order what they wanted from the Central Film Library. We assume that film libraries will be established, as more schools are provided with projection equipment, by individual local authorities and by groups of local authorities until there is a local library easily accessible to every school. It will be some time before a fully efficient and economical system of film libraries can be established, and it presents some administrative problems, but the principles can be stated. The libraries should be established on a territorial basis and all users of educational films within the area should get all their films through the library for that area. The area serviced by a film library should be an area within which every borrower can receive a film without fail within twenty-four hours from the time it is despatched; it should be possible in many areas to achieve this by the use of vans delivering and collecting films throughout the area every day. Each local library would hold copies of the films and film strips likely to be in heavy and constant demand within its area. (Some films and more particularly many film strips would be held in individual school libraries.) The composition of local libraries would vary according to the type of area covered and the number of each type of school within it. The local libraries would be the distribution centres not only for Ministry of Education films but also for all films produced and distributed by the National Film Office. They would also acquire films from whatever other sources they wished. A local library receiving an application for a film which it did not hold would apply for it to the county or regional library,

and they in turn would apply for it, if necessary, to the Central Film Library which would hold copies of all films and film strips produced or acquired by the National Film Office. The Central Film Library would only make loans through other libraries. It would be the Central Film Library's functions to supply local libraries with the copies they needed both initially and as replacements for damaged or worn out copies. The local libraries would pay for the copies they ordered but all users of the libraries would receive films free. A national film library service on these lines would reduce time wasted in transit of films to a minimum, an important consideration in view of the cost of copies. More important it would save teachers much of the time, energy and anxiety at present spent on getting films from dozens of different sources and give them a free film service comparable to the free book service already available to them.

The Teachers

The success of such a plan as we have outlined depends on the teachers. We believe that the Ministry of Education must finance educational film production, that it must appoint an Advisory Council for Visual Aids, that it should be able to produce its films through the agency of a National Film Office and to distribute them through local film libraries established by the local education authorities. We believe also that the Ministry must initiate a scheme for the bulk purchase of projection equipment of improved design on behalf of the local authorities. But we recognise that if all this were done it might be useless and, at the worst, inimical to the purposes of education unless the teachers assess and criticise what is done. It is essential that a teachers' film organisation on the lines of the Scottish Educational Film Association should be formed in England, to view and discuss films produced, to carry out experiments and research, to forward criticisms of existing films and recommendations for new films through their national organisation to the Ministry of Education. The association should be absolutely independent and be able to speak with authority to the Ministry which should itself do all it can to encourage the formation of such an English Educational Film Association.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

Bell, Book and Candle

OLIVER BELL, promoted editorially by *The Kinematograph Weekly* from Director of the B.F.I. to President, gave that paper his comments on visual education on May 31st. After explaining that the B.F.I. has kept contact with Education Authorities throughout the war (in spite of the fact that only some 40 out of 320 L.E.As. are affiliated to the B.F.I.), he reports that no one opposes the use of a film-strip projector as a piece of standard equipment in schools. After this glimpse of the obvious, he turns to the production of educational films. The Governors of the B.F.I., he announces, recommend a Visual Education Council, representative of users and producers, to decide what films are needed and to vet scripts. The films are then to be made speculatively for sale to the L.E.A s. at what Bell calls "normal prices". To tie everything up neatly, the Governors propose that, at the same time, producers should be guaranteed against loss. Bell admits that this plan is not as theoretically perfect as a highly centralised production and distribution service, but says that the Ministry of Education should not sponsor films, because they do not sponsor text-books. By putting the producer on a speculative basis, and at the same time guaranteeing him against loss, the B.F.I. removes the enterprise from private enterprise but leaves in the profits, thus playing the Treasury and the taxpayer for a sucker. The whole proposal is flatly against the considered opinions of all the documentary producing units with the exception of the Gaumont British interests.

Documentary Federation

WE WELCOME the *Federation of Documentary Film Units* which the independent units have set up to represent them officially and to further their interests at home and abroad. The new Federation proposes to pool the knowledge and experience of its members, to carry on research and experimental work and to promote in every way possible the interests of the documentary movement as a whole. The units concerned are: Basic Films Ltd., Documentary Technicians Alliance Ltd., Films of Fact Ltd., Greenpark Productions Ltd., Merlin Film Co. Ltd., Realist Film Unit Ltd., Seven-League Productions Ltd., Taurus Film Productions Ltd., World Wide Pictures Ltd. The elected Management Committee is Paul Rotha (Chairman), R. K. Neilson Baxter (Secretary), and Donald Alexander.

Science in Society

THE SCIENTIFIC FILM ASSOCIATION is now circulating a Scientific Film Society Newsletter to secretaries of societies, of which 18 have so far affiliated. The combined membership of 17 societies of which the S.F.A. has records amounts to 3,560. On an average the audience at any show is equally divided between members and visitors. Two-thirds of the membership of a society attend each show. Thus at least 5,000 people a month attended scientific film shows last winter to say nothing of the societies not yet affiliated to the S.F.A. and the great number of single shows organised by bodies such as the Association of Scientific Workers. If the collective influence of the Scientific Film Society's audiences can be mobilised, it will increasingly develop a public demand for objective films of social and scientific importance. This may have a profound effect in determining the proper use of science in relation to government and citizenship.

South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA is perhaps the most backward country in the Empire from the point of view of film production, whether fictional or documentary. It is remarkable, therefore, that one South African, Leon Schauder, now a war correspondent in Italy, has managed to make a distinguished series of films from about 1938, including *Non Quasi*, *Karoo*, *We of the Veldt*, *Drift*, and *Father and Son*, a film now being edited by the M.O.I. All these films have been documentary studies, mainly of coloured African life, but his first studio-made short—*Words in Darkness*—has just been shown privately in London. The dialogue was written by Uys Krige, the Afrikaans poet. The film, played almost wholly on one set, brings together men of the United Nations, each of whom, it is explained, has been killed in action. It is impressionistic in style and must have created a sensation in South Africa where it secured theatrical distribution. It is passionately anti-Fascist in tone but, though the sentiment that all men of all colours and races are united against Fascism is expressed in the commentary, no coloured African is shown. Further, at the end of the film, a German soldier joins the group and is accepted without demur. It is implied that the German soldier, like the other soldiers, is merely the victim of something he could not control. This point is likely to provoke ideological argument if the film is shown in this country.

Medical Sciences

FILM CENTRE has appointed Dr. Stephen Ackroyd, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., to be Director of its Medical Sciences Section.

THE CREATIVE FORCE

by Harry Randall

of the Canadian Film and Photo Unit

THERE is a noticeable tendency towards diminishing returns in people's creative activity. Often a film wins a favourable reception because of its originality, revelation of life, wit, or analytical power. Its successors from the same craftsman or team gradually lose their impact. What should have matured as a style becomes through mechanical repetition a dry formula.

The delightful irrationality and inventiveness of the early Disney cartoons have largely been replaced by coy sentimentality, repetitious cuteness and the pursuit of naturalistic drawing and movement, with neglect of the spontaneous transformations and visual clowning natural to animated cartoons.

Pre-war North American newsreels became frozen into a repetitive pattern. Each week's reel had its fashion show, its horse race, its ship launching, its football game, its parade, its "personality" arriving in port, each story photographed and cut in the same manner as its prototype of the previous week. Some of the regular items could hardly be considered news of public interest, and many real news items were so cut to a pattern and so shouted over by a commentator who had developed a bad case of "narrator's voice" that their significance was lost.

This portentous, agitated and unrelenting voice (familiar to all who have heard American radio programmes) is another example of freezing into moulds. Originally introduced as a method of dramatising exciting events over the radio or on the newsreel screen, it became the habitual manner of most narrators, whose every report, advertisement or introduction sounded like a scoop announcement of the Great Flood. As a reaction against this, many film makers have tried to record commentaries that are not forced or excessively wordy, but which sound natural and intimate. This technique as well is already being used as a formula, and dynamic visual patterns are in danger of getting a tired, sad, vocal accompaniment, which is too laconic for the information that it must convey.

Surprise is lacking in the more recent of Hitchcock's thrillers because his formula for surprise is too well known. The sharp satire of *The Great McGinty* is dull and diffuse in the latest films of Preston Sturges, and the *Conquering Hero* conquers less formidable foibles than the *Miracle* or *Sullivan's Travels*.

The *March of Time* has lost some of its force by repetition of the same familiar vocal nuances. In the *World in Action* the foreboding voice of Cassandra which shook people into an awareness of the Nazi danger now accompanies demonstrations of the over-powering might of the Allies.

The approach to reality in many documentary films is along a well-worn path. The pipe in the mouth, the pin-pointed map on the wall, the casualness to the point of insignificance, the commentator behind a desk who looks up from his work to discover the camera, the same stock shots used in differing contexts, the quick World Tour of roaring guns for international reference, are devices which no longer carry conviction.

There are many factors involved in these phenomena. The new work which attracts attention is probably the product of an enthusiastic tackling of the numerous varied production problems, problems of complicated machinery, of plot and acting, emphasis, movement and angle, selection and arrangement, every one of which receives individual attention. The new producer (or team, as film making is team work), may have the advantage of an individual way of seeing and telling, which interests because of its freshness and unfamiliarity. Also, he is likely to be in close participating contact with a large number of representative people. Moreover, he may have accumulated in the course of long apprenticeship a number of ideas and plans about film making, which he is now able to put to test. If he is shooting on location, he may find himself in strange surroundings, which he records while his first impressions are still fresh.

The resulting work may have some rough edges, but it will very likely possess vitality and an appropriate technique. Intimate struggle with each particular problem will have resulted in a suitable method of dealing with it.

Having mastered a workable set of methods through practice, the film maker has a ready-made bag of tricks to take care of the less important routines on his next assignments. He is able to focus his attention on the major problems. High overhead and the pressure of a production schedule make it necessary for him to utilise short-cuts. The elements with which he is most preoccupied will give his work its special style. And as Ernest Newman has recently pointed out regarding musicians, his habitual devices for dealing summarily with minor problems will also stamp his work with "fingerprints."

All well and good. But as his experience accumulates, this bag of tricks may expand to cover more and more aspects of production. If his film making becomes an uninspired routine, the films will be full of solutions that have worked before, but are now stale. He has not learned to make films; he has learned merely to repeat and copy. Repetition may even be what his employers want of him—but eventually it will wear thin, and audiences will no longer be moved by his work. Mechanical copying of previous success can reproduce only the skeleton, and not the flesh and blood. Is it surprising that a film is stillborn when its makers have experienced neither the joys of conception nor the pains of parturition?

A second factor in the diminution of the creative force is the loss of contacts with popular life and activity, which may come with success. Working, talking and drinking within a group of specialists, one will find his interests and activities becoming ingrown. His thought and action will spring from the thoughts and actions of the narrow world in which his orbit has become fixed. His inspiration will be a secondary derivative of the inspirations of others, or of his own earlier conceptions. He will redigest mental food which has been several times digested. In part this may result in a refining and sharpening of many lines of thought. The debt which all forms of science and culture owe to a long cumulative heritage is tremendous. But where the mental inbreeding is too confined, and cut off from the rest of the society in which it takes place, the invigorating contacts with the vital problems and forces operating in that society are lacking, and the products will be the sterile ones of a cult. Film being essentially a popular form, depending for its very existence upon an interested audience of millions, it cannot divorce itself from the factories and armies, farms and warehouses, pubs and playing fields, school class rooms and city streets.

Or, having "arrived", one may be content to rest upon past achievement, happy in regular attendance at the club bar, where constructive activity is likely to be drowned in a flood of small talk and drink.

A third factor is the loss of the capacity to see which comes with familiarity. The sharp observation and wonder stimulated by something seen or experienced for the first time fade away as frequent contact renders it commonplace. One relapses into the common adult tendency to classify and pigeon-hole every stimulus to, respond with the reactions habitual to the type or class of event to which the experience belongs, rather than to the unique experience itself. The consummation of a romance will be just like all other love affairs. The liberation of one city will seem the same as the liberation of another. This is surely the road to cliché!

The film maker who would retain his vigour and his audience must approach every subject and problem with fresh zest, keeping a watchful eye on his store of methods to make sure they do not master him. For him, as for the novice, there is no easy road to creation. In order most clearly and forcefully to communicate his meaning, he must continually refresh his style with new methods of work: new ideas, new juxtapositions, new faces, new characters, new principles—not along the path of Formalism, but by dipping into life which is complex and ever-changing, and which does not reward those who reduce it to formulae.

The complaint "There are no more worlds to conquer" could have proceeded only from lazy man's inertia in the face of problems which could not be solved in the habitual way. The people who never grow senile are those who maintain their curiosity and their interest in exploring new paths, as Verdi, Pavlov, Shaw, Mme Curie, Edison and Freud have done. Speaking of the enthusiasm with which he made the film *Arsenal*, Alexander Dovzhenko said: "This excitement runs like a crimson thread through all my work. I think I shall never lose it." Such is the essence of the creative force.

Documentary News Letter

Editorial Board

Edgar Anstey · Donald Taylor
Geoffrey Bell · John Taylor
Arthur Elton · Alex Shaw

Owned and Published by

FILM CENTRE LTD.
34 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W.1
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NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Farm Worker. Produced for the Departments of Agriculture by the Crown Film Unit. M.O.I. 20 mins.
Subject: The advantages and disadvantages of farm work as a career.
Treatment: An experienced farmer takes a young soldier over his farm to show him what the work is like. The soldier's questions, spoken and unspoken, are answered. The life is lonely and hard. Meeting a tenant farmer on the way, they are told that he had to start by working up his bit of land after a day's work on something else in order to earn a living. The herdsman trudges through the mud and slime before the sun has risen. The milkman is up every morning at 5 for 365 days in the year (cows do not recognise holidays). The tractor driver is out all day alone. The farmer's wife has a hard day of it too, looking after the house, feeding the chickens, walking a couple of miles to the village shop. She must like the work and not mind being alone all day, or her husband will not be a contented farmer.

The farmer commentator goes out of his way to point out the hardships, but the camera reveals the compensations; the beautiful countryside that is always living and growing, the cheerful crowds at harvest time, the constant company of animals and birds, the community life in the village. The tractor driver may eat his lunch alone by the hedge, but he gazes proudly across the fields at his long straight furrows.
Propaganda Value: This government film for showing to men about to be demobilised is a welcome move to frustrate the land racketeers who, after the last war, wrung money from the misguided ex-servicemen in return for the illusion of independence. This film will encourage those best suited for the job to take up agriculture.

Penicillin. *Production:* Realist Film Unit for I.C.I. *Producer:* John Taylor. *Directors:* Alexander Shaw and Kay Mander. 21 mins.
Subject: How Penicillin was discovered, what it does and how it is commercially produced.
Treatment: This film seeks to relate the work of the many British scientists who have worked on Penicillin with the practical benefits of their world-famous achievement. We see Dr. Florey, Professor Fleming, Dr. Chain and the rest in their laboratories. In beautifully photographed sequences we see re-enacted such historical moments in the history of Penicillin as Professor Fleming's accidental discovery of the germ-killing powers of the mould Penicillium Notatum. In intercut sequences the practical application of the drug is demonstrated by the story of a British soldier wounded in Holland whose leg is saved by Penicillin treatment. We follow his case from the front line to the base hospital and thence by air ambulance to England, with Penicillin in continuous use. The fact that a large number of scientists must be given credit for the discovery and production of the drug means that the film necessarily devotes considerable footage to shots of the distinguished personalities at work, footage which could perhaps have been more profitably used in a detailed explanation of the way in which the drug works and the scientific reasons for its curative properties. But as a compensation the importance of team-work between scientists is brought out strongly and the film does make clear the great difficulties faced and overcome in achieving an adequate commercial production of a drug which has done much to reduce the number of permanent war casualties.

The episodes of the wounded soldier do not quite match in interest the scientific sequences, and the intercutting device is not completely successful.
Propaganda Value: This is a good example of what can be done by film to interest the public in the solution of scientific problems. The success of the scientific sequences with West End audiences suggests that ordinary cinema-goers would be satisfied with the scientific facts even undiluted with the "human story" of Nat the wounded soldier.

Stricken Peninsula. *Direction:* Paul Fletcher. *Supervising Editor:* H. M. Nieter. *Music:* R. Vaughan Williams. M.O.I. 15 mins.
Subject: The story of Southern Italy, particularly the Naples area, during the period preceding the liberation of the Northern districts.
Treatment: This joint Army Film Unit–M.O.I. effort is one of the more remarkable films to result from Service shooting. Paul Fletcher has examined his subject from a traditional documentary standpoint. Here is no newsreel coverage but an attempt to select and analyse episodes in the story of liberation, and to assemble them into a picture which will give not only the material facts but also the mood and feeling of Italians suddenly fallen between the two stools of Nazism and liberation. Some critics may find the camera dwelling too long on semi-symbolic visuals and there is little attempt at economy of coverage. But such moving episides as the mass disinfecting of citizens and the clamorous underfed food queues tell us more eloquently than words that the people of Italy may have been liberated but certainly are not yet rehabilitated or even given much opportunity to regain the dignity of free men. The sordid, unhappy scenes are relieved by brighter moments of restored power stations and ploughs taken out once more to the war-scarred fields. But the film leaves us feeling that here is a vast national problem with the full solution still to be found. *Stricken Peninsula* is severely handicapped by what in the reviewer's opinion is an execrable musical score by Dr. Vaughan Williams. Whatever musical qualities are present achieve no marriage with visual or commentary. One is conscious only of obtrusive and disagreeable noise intruding between the audience and a moving story.
Propaganda Value: Salutary and excellent. The realities of war's aftermath presented with considerable artistry.

(*continued on p.* 83)

I.C.I. *Film Productions*

Imperial Chemical Industries are engaged in the production of films as visual aids in scientific education.

The following productions have been completed:

From the TECHNIQUE OF ANAESTHESIA SERIES:
Open Drop Ether
Nitrous Oxide - Oxygen - Ether Anaesthesia
Endotracheal Anaesthesia
Intravenous Anaesthesia Part 1
Spinal Anaesthesia
(Available to approved medical audiences only)

From the HEALTH OF DAIRY CATTLE SERIES:
Mastitis
Contagious Abortion
Tuberculosis

From the SCHOOL SCIENCE SERIES:
Water
Water Cycle

THIS IS COLOUR
(*A Technicolor film about the British Dyestuffs industry and the nature and use of colour*)

THE HARVEST SHALL COME
(*A sociological film about the British agricultural worker*)

With the exception of This is Colour (in 16 mm. only) these films are in 35 mm. and 16 mm. sizes. All are Sound films.

All the above are available through the Central Film Library, to which applications for loan should be made.

Other films in production will be announced when completed.

ICI

IMPERIAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES LTD., NOBEL HOUSE, BUCKINGHAM GATE, S.W.1

LONGSHOT OF BRITISH NON-THEATRICAL

By J. R. Williams

Reprinted from *Educational Screen*

I REVISITED Britain recently, after an absence dating from June, 1942, and in a tour of the country I took pains to find out what was happening in the world of non-theatrical films. I was most struck by the way in which they have become part of the life of the people. It is much more surprising to be able to say this about Britain than about America because, though Britain may fairly claim to be one of the leaders in the creation of documentary films, she was at the start of the war (and in one sense still is) very far behind the U.S.A. in 16 mm. film distribution. The reason is simple: the number of projectors, even in proportion to population, is much less.

A more acute need, however, can bring forward a more swift remedy, and the stimulus of war needs brought on a period of almost bewilderingly rapid progress in Britain. The Ministry of Information adopted an encouraging attitude to films from the start, and by the fall of 1940 there was in existence an elaborate non-theatrical scheme manned by a great corps of enthusiasts. Since there were not enough projectors to make a library distribution of prints effective, the plan had to be more drastic. A fleet of mobile units was set up so as to cover the whole country. Fortunately, Britain's population is, by American standards, very compact, and it was comparatively easy to reach most communities from the control points at the Ministry's twelve regional offices.

The English countryside has its problems, however, and I shall never forget the excitement of the fall and winter of 1940 (I was a Regional Film Officer then), with cars breaking down in the middle of snowstorms, a projectionist here and there sleeping in his unit in a snowdrift, or an audience turning up to a village show on sledges.

Meanwhile, right at the outset, the Battle of Britain was on, and when one saw the confidential reports listing railroads blocked, bridges blown and culverts dammed up, one wondered if the promised films would ever be more than a dream. Then one morning a little pile of cartons would appear on the doorstep of the office, and *Into the Blue*, *Behind the Guns* and *Dangerous Comment* would go into circulation. There was something miraculous about these films appearing out of the midst of the battle, and they gave us a strange kind of excitement.

It was exciting, too, to find how the audiences ate up the films: within six months a solid scheme had been worked out for serving the whole country, and inside a year every city, town, village and hamlet was being taken care of in some way.

It soon became clear that the best markets were at the two extremes. On the one hand the factories clamoured for films, and lunch-time shows rapidly became the most important single block of bookings. On the other hand, the rural villages welcomed with great enthusiasm this completely new addition to their social life. Almost the entire population would turn out for the show, whatever the weather, and some of the older, stay-at-home folks actually had their first experience of sound films on these village-hall occasions. Film Officers became accustomed to receiving letters from remote rural villages saying that this new miracle of the sound-projector which came right into your community hall promised to transform the social life and culture of the countryside.

In the cities there were many audiences outside factories which welcomed the films. The rule was simple: any organisation which could provide a hall and an audience of 100 or upwards could have a show. The Ministry would provide all the rest: projectionist, projector, films, screen and even electric current if necessary (supplied from a gasoline generator).

Clubs and community groups of all kinds took advantage of this service. Amongst the first, in my part of the country, were the working men's clubs, which are a characteristic feature of the life of industrial Britain, and the Women's Institutes, which organise the spare-time life of both women and men in the rural villages. I remember having a block of bookings in the Sheffield Working Men's clubs when the great blitz fell on the city. We were preparing to write these off as a week's straight cancellations when there came in a prompt report-card from a club which had mustered an audience of 400 men the night after the blitz. The film the audience had liked best was *Men of the Lightship:* reason—"the courage of the men."

Then there was a projectionist in East Yorkshire who used to report regularly: "Show O.K., air raid in progress."

Gatherings of air-raid wardens and fire guards were great occasions for films, especially when we were able to give them technical films on their own job, such as *Fire Guard*. I shall never forget a gathering of Fire Guards (civilian fire watchers) in one of the big industrial cities. The Air Raid Wardens (full-time, paid men) had organised the show, and attendance was restricted to the street leaders of the city. There was a maximum attendance and 2,500 enthusiasts packed the City Hall right to the top shelf. The meeting opened with community singing. We used 35 mm. and gave them a 90-minutes show, beginning with the Carl Sandburg film *Bomber*, going on to *Fire Guard*, and ending with defiance films about British resistance to Hitler. The show was followed by thirty 16 mm. shows to the rank and file of the fire-watchers throughout the City, each of which drew capacity audiences in local community halls. There was not much doubt about the morale of that city.

On my recent return to the scenes of these old enthusiasms, it was easy to see that the excitement of the early days was ended. But something even better had emerged. Films have proved their community value, and a steady, sober practice of using them has developed throughout Britain. In 1943–44, 150 mobile units gave 67,000 shows to an audience of 11¼ millions, using at each of these shows anything from two to six pictures. In addition, the Central Film Library (which is part of the Ministry of Information's organisation) made 130,000 shipments of films to borrowers having their own projectors, and there were 1,700 full-dress 35 mm. shows given outside normal hours (mostly on Sundays) in theatres.

The films used include both those of general community value and specialised films intended for specific groups. I saw a typical general show when I was in Manchester. Right in the centre of the city the public library—untouched by the blitz—puts its auditorium at the disposal of the Ministry once a week. Here I found an earnest audience, seventy-five per cent men and obviously busy people, not just loiterers with a lunch-time to kill. They sat attentively through two films (including one which told the story of how the War Office made a new anti-tank gun especially to keep a "date" with a new German tank on the Mareth Line) and then hurried away soberly to their work.

What struck me about a lunch-time show which I saw in a Leeds factory was how much this kind of thing seemed to be a part of the normal life of the place. I asked representatives of both management and labour whether they thought the practice should continue after the war. They had no doubt of it.

I paid a visit to Stratford-on-Avon, not to see Shakespeare's birthplace, but to attend a showing of films to a youth organisation of the kind the Ministry of Education has set up as a means of combating the tendency to juvenile delinquency. The young Stratfordians were a turbulent crowd —very much like a crowd of young American jive-enthusiasts—but the films held them, and they were not slow to express their appreciation of pictures of the rigours of Atlantic trawling or sheep farming in the mountains of Scotland. These boys and girls certainly did not realise they were being "educated". To them it was fun.

Alongside the generalised film shows the M.O.I. has, from 1941, promoted the more specialised uses of films, and this type of use has grown quickly of late. The Ministry produces, or arranges for production of, films for farmers, films for doctors, for housewives, for builders, for furnacemen and so on. When I was in the Midlands, for example, I saw one of the County Agricultural Executive Committees, which have been so active in implementing the Ministry of Agriculture's policy, previewing a batch of new agricultural films with a view of using them amongst the farmers. Two days later I was able to see a group of Welsh policewomen taking in the brand-new film on juvenile delinquency, *Children of the City*. It is particularly satisfying to see a film hit the nail on the head like this.

In all this ferment and development, the schools are not yet playing the part which they undoubtedly will play soon after the war. Here the British 16 mm. scene differs very markedly from the American one, in which the school is so prominent. The reason is again the simple one—shortage of projectors. The British schools have not yet been properly awakened to the possibilities of films and at present there are not the projectors for them to buy, even if they had the money to buy them. During the war the M.O.I. mobile units have helped considerably, but it has been ruled consistently that the Ministry's first business is with adults, and the schools have been offered no more than the spare time of the units.

It is confidently expected that all this will change rapidly after the war, and that the newly-created Ministry of Education (replacing the old Board) will make up the leeway in visual education.

Before returning to New York, I did witness one very interesting and unusual M.O.I. show at a school of "junior high" type in a mining town. A new film on road-safety for children was the centrepiece of the occasion; but the showing of this had been synchronised with a campaign undertaken by the county police. A policeman, specially trained for his job, introduced the film with a little homily of his own. He was quite a teacher himself, in his own way. He made friends with the children, taking care to identify himself with their interests, and convinced them that laws and regulations were intended for their good. After this the film was a great success.

Everything I saw in Britain gave me confidence that the future for non-theatrical film is secure. What part the government will play in post-war plans has not yet been announced, but there is a growing conviction that the ground which has been won shall not be lost; a belief that the various Ministries should use films as part of the means by which they both discharge their duties and give their masters, the people, an account of their stewardship. Alongside this there can be no doubt that the private, commercial development of 16 mm. films will go ahead at a great pace.

Finally, everyone in the documentary movement in England hopes and believes that the film is going to play a great part in the international relations of the future. By no other means can nations explain so vividly their ways of life, or contribute from their experience to the common pool of civilisation.

A film display which I attended in the auditorium of the Cadbury plant in Bournville was a particularly good omen of this. It was an all American programme of films borrowed from the O.W.I. in London. The feature of the evening was the T.V.A. film, and a young Lieutenant from Tennessee had come over to give a note of authenticity to the occasion. An audience of over a thousand, mostly young people, received the whole programme very intently. I spent more time looking at the audience than at the screen, for it seemed to me a symbolic occasion. This, I thought, was one of the audiences of the future, learning about the ways of another people and another country, not from pedagogues nor from entertainers, but from those who have realised in a new way Macaulay's ambition to make history as fascinating as fiction.

PERCY SMITH

Percy Smith, pioneer of British Scientific Film Production, died on March 24th, 1944. We print below two appreciations of his work and personality

It was in 1908 that Smith threw up an appointment with the Board of Education and gave himself up entirely to cinematography. He started working for Charles Urban and specialised in nature and microscopic work. Even in these early days he had developed his special technique of speeded-up cinematography, and had shown in "The World before Your Eyes" series, the beauties of the flower unfolding on the screen. Smith worked for Charles Urban for several years; but had no real opportunity of showing what he could do until in 1921 he took his part in the production of the "Secrets of Nature" series which, largely through Smith's contribution, has gone on ever since, and has thus created a record for this or any other country of continuous production over a period of twenty-five years.

British cinematography has suffered a great loss as Smith's work was known and admired in nearly every country where cinematograph films are shown. Whenever a representative selection of British films has been shown to special audiences, something emanating from Smith's studio has always been included. In 1930 at the gala presentation organised by the Federation of British Industries to the delegates to the Imperial Conference, his *Plants of the Underworld* was shown, and later, in 1933 at a similar gala presentation to world press representatives, he contributed *Gathering Moss*.

Although much of Smith's work was shown in the theatres, and many will remember the weird beauty of his *Plants of the Underworld* and the drama of *The Life of a Plant*, yet his main work was rather in the scientific film. Here he was undoubtedly in a class by himself, especially in the field of biology. In collaboration with Dr. Julian Huxley, he contributed a series of biological subjects that have done more to bring about the use of the cinema film in schools than any other single event. In connection with this, Dr. Julian Huxley remarks: "Percy Smith had extraordinary patience and pertinacity in getting the results he wanted. In addition he was extremely ingenious in devising apparatus and gadgets of every description. His work was essential for the building up of high technical standards in the difficult art of biological film-making."

Although his studies of the chick and the frog were of very high quality, there is little doubt that it was his botanical films, made in collaboration with Dr. E. J. Salisbury, that opened up fresh possibilities to the cinematograph camera. As Dr. Salisbury writes: "Mr. Percy Smith was a first-rate cinematographer, who combined great technical skill with patience and observational acumen. The film which he took of the growth of roots is not only one of his most successful efforts, but exemplifies these qualities in a high degree. The knowledge of what is the life-history of a plant or its normal behaviour under particular conditions is not the end, but only the starting point in their pictorial portrayal. It was in the patience necessary to ascertain the precise phase of a phenomenon that best lent itself to pictorial record that Percy Smith exhibited so high a degree of skill almost amounting to genius."

The study, research and the patience that were necessary to complete such subjects as the life-histories of the fern and the moss were enormous, and nobody except a person whose sole interest lay in his work would have undertaken them. The fern film took three years to complete and that on the moss two and a half.

In the field of international competition, Smith's work had upheld the prestige of Great Britain, and prizes had been awarded to his films in open competition against all comers, notably at Brussels and Venice.

Smith's was a strange personality. He had no thought for anything other than his work, and the only assistant he would tolerate was his wife. He was of a retiring and shy disposition, but with a keen sense of humour and a positive genius for the invention of "gadgets". In his studio he had machines to record the growth of plants; these, of course, had to work night and day. They were controlled by clockwork, made by himself, and it was essential that they should function continuously, sometimes for several weeks. As even he had to sleep sometimes, he devised a means whereby if any of the machines stopped for any reason, it rang a bell by his bedside and woke him up.

In Percy Smith the British film industry loses a lovable personality and one whose work has done more than a little to uphold the prestige of British films. The sympathy of all goes out to his wife, who assisted him so ably, in her loss.

BRUCE WOOLFE

I SHOULD like to remember the personality and industry that lay behind the monumental achievement of Percy Smith.

In 1940 Percy Smith undertook some specialised work for *Malaria*, a film then being made by the Shell Film Unit. This brought me into contact with him for the first time; I had several long and pleasurable sessions at his house in Southgate, where Percy Smith and his wife received their many visitors with a charm and a kindliness that wholly defeated the clock.

To visit his laboratories and workshops was a revelation of a lifetime's patient ingenuity: each room in his laboratory house being packed with apparatus designed and created by himself. It is not the least part of his achievement that, under his loving care, equipment flourished for many times its normal span of usefulness, and was often made out of the most unlikely material. Seeing Percy Smith at work amongst his family of machines, each happily filming an aspect of plant or animal life, made one realise how few of us could hope to achieve the skill and the highly developed patience which made him such a master of his craft.

One came away with many impressions, but perhaps the strongest was of Percy Smith's overriding kindliness. He gave the feeling that if one had set up as a rival cinemicrographer across the road, he would have come over the very day of arrival to help one jump the stiles he had climbed himself so many years ago. And that, in an acquisitive society such as we live in, is a very rare thing to find.

GRAHAME THARP

THE TEACHING FILM

A PLEA FOR ACTION

by R. K. Neilson Baxter

IT IS nearly thirty years since books and pamphlets on the value of films as a teaching aid began to appear. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that during the whole of that time no progress has been made in bringing together the teachers who would use such films and the technicians who make them. With a number of notable exceptions, the teachers' approach has been so hedged round with prejudices that one has sometimes felt that perhaps after all the use of film in schools could never be successful. They have all been immensely handicapped by the lack of films specifically made for the purpose, lack of variety both in subject matter and presentation, and above all lack of projectors in the schools. It is not surprising that conclusions were hard to draw, that progress was slow and prejudice became common.

But in the last few months a great surge of activity seems to have started, involving so many cross-currents that on analysis it becomes a little alarming. In April two unions had their annual general meetings—the Association of Cine-Technicians and the National Union of Teachers. A.C.T. again called for a continuation of government sponsorship and the Central Film Library after the war. At the N.U.T. conference a resolution was passed calling for children's cinemas, projectors in schools and the establishment of a national council including representatives from the Ministry of Education, local authorities, A.C.T., and the British Film Institute. During the month the B.F.I., which is the official advisory body on films to the Ministry of Education, visited Mr. Butler to propose a government subsidy for the production of educational films, and a central council to administer it. Representatives of The Arts Enquiry, The Scientific Film Association and several influential individuals have also "waited on the Minister" to put their points of view.

Meanwhile, in the practical field, Hull Education Committee has reported upon a local scheme of distribution to schools which has been running there as a successful experiment for two years. Many conclusions of great practical value are the result. In Devon, during the schools' spring term, Mrs. Marcousé (Visual Education Centre, University College of the South-West) took a mobile unit to a number of schools on a weekly rota system, which enabled teachers to choose from a library of some sixty films and a quantity of still material that which fitted best with their current syllabuses. Again the information gained is of great interest.

The Ministry of Education has obtained finance from the Treasury for a small number of films. This should be regarded as an experiment in sponsorship rather than an attempt to provide the films which are most urgently needed. It is a pity that having decided upon so progressive a step, the Ministry did not seek advice from the best sources—from teachers who had experience in using film, and from those film technical associations with relevant knowledge. It is good news that a second batch is proposed and that some of these sources are this time being consulted.

There are other projects in the production field. Some industrial sponsors are turning their attention to school needs, the Dartington Hall foundation has plans, and Mr. Rank's G.B. Instructional has let it be known that they will make school films if a paying system of distribution can be guaranteed in advance.

All this activity is an indication that perhaps at last the barriers are being broken down. But the lack of co-ordination of effort still displayed is lamentable. There can be no real progress towards planned production and distribution until the many organisations and individuals who are now active come together. And without planned production there can be no certainty of getting the films that are really needed. Teachers and technicians alike have all sorts of ideas about the use of educational films, their presentation and their technique. Many of them are untried ideas. Experiment is vitally necessary. Experiments cannot be carried out fully unless a really large number of schools are equipped with projectors.

If the provision of projectors and ancillary equipment in schools is to be done properly, it must be a national undertaking. It is unfair to expect them to be provided by local authorities whose financial status varies from county to county and borough to borough. It is absurd to leave it to the schools themselves, and reduce them to such shifts as buying what they can out of the proceeds of jumble sales and the hawking of Christmas calendars by the pupils round their families and friends. It is unwise to allow the recommendations of local salesmen to govern the choice of a suitable machine.

Teachers must have a chance to understand the equipment they are going to use if visual aids are to be given a full opportunity to prove themselves. It is good to know that courses in optical aids are being introduced into more and more teachers' training colleges, and into the emergency training scheme for men and women to be demobilised from the Forces. But the lack of proper equipment in some cases is pitiful. One hears of re-winding done with the spools spindled on pencils and of makeshift splicing done by hand. The needs of the training colleges are one of the first priorities with which the Ministry of Education's inspectorate and film advisory panel should concern themselves.

There are innumerable problems still to be solved—practical problems concerning the correct placing of projectors in the class or lecture room; the type of presentation required for different age groups, on which much useful experiment has already been done in Scotland; the never-ending controversy about the use of sound, and so on. And the biggest problem of all is the question of distribution, which will become more and more acute as the idea of the "visual unit" grows.

These problems can only be solved by carefully planned experimentation, if the maximum effect in the minimum time is to be achieved. Who is to guide this planning? There have been persistent recommendations to the Ministry of Education that an official advisory panel should be set up, ending with the proposals made by the B.F.I. in April for a body similar to the Central Council for School Broadcasting. But what is to be the representation on this panel? And who is to choose the representatives? Is every organisation in the teaching profession and in the film industry which has studied visual aids and their problems to be invited to appoint a representative? Educationists and technicians alike, whatever their affiliations may be, have something to contribute. Is not co-operation the keyword?

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LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

From Colin Dean, Ministry of Reconstruction, Canberra

ANY KEEN follower in Australia of the documentary film movement draws little satisfaction from the constant reminders of the high purpose of documentary films by *D.N.L.* editorials and contributors in the face of our inability to see the films which represent "the creative interpretation of reality."

This is not the fault of *D.N.L.* or of the film makers, but because of the sheer impossibility of seeing a British film (*a*) when it is topical, (*b*) at all, if it offends our supposed political susceptibilities.

There are exceptions of course. Pat Jackson's *Western Approaches* had its Australian première here in Canberra last week. But then Royalty was in the audience and all the proceeds went to the Red Cross, and it may be fairly certain of commercial distribution this year. On the other count *World of Plenty* with showings sponsored by a Government Department in Sydney, had a very popular run not in a theatre but in the Town Hall.

But consider the case of *In Which We Serve*, *The First of the Few*, *San Demetrio*, *London*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* and *The Way Ahead*. The last two of these made their first appearance on an Australian screen in about February, 1945. The others were delayed in terms of years. *Film and Reality* has never been heard of. *Nine Men* appeared with Harry Watt about two years after it had been made. The list of delayed British films would contain the names of practically every one that has been produced during the last four years. But it's not only theatricals. Where are the films 35 mm., 16 mm. or even 9.5, if you like, that represent the hopes of the people throughout the world as they emerge from this chaos? We just don't see them.

What's the answer? Grierson probably had it when he made recommendations to the Imperial Relations Trust, when he was here in 1940, for grants to be made for the establishment of film committees in some of the capital cities and a Film Centre here. These groups have been hamstrung through lack of equipment, but gradually they are dispelling the aroma of stale air that Australians imagine hangs over a documentary film. The imperfection of 16 mm. projection and the fact that films which are available are worn and badly recorded does not help any, and another most important factor which has prevented the documentary film from being more popular here, even to a limited public, is the fact that most of the films seem to be produced either as an advertising medium or for war propaganda in other countries and therefore with little local significance or, where their purpose has been for invigoration or education, with about as much imagination as a geometry book. Films like *The World of Plenty*, Capra's *Why We Fight* series, and Steiner's *The City* are all too few. The great Australian public flocks to *Mrs. Miniver* and other phonies, and until documentary films can by sheer weight of technical superiority and human interest defeat fiction by fact, they are going to sit in the backwater of intellectual and academic argument.

It is perhaps even more unfortunate from our own local point of view that Australian films have not filled this growing need. Damien Parer's newsreels, while being an exceedingly capable and faithful reportage, hardly enter the field of a documentary. Charles Chauvel's *Rats of Tobruk*, made under very difficult conditions, didn't set anyone on fire. We hope, however, that Harry Watt's *The Overlanders* will give Australians, as well as geographical information about their own country and an understanding of what people are like who live out near "the Alice", a statement that we are a purposeful and progressive lot of people, despite what Laughton's *Man Down Under* and the daily papers say we are.

Harry Watt's visit has done a lot to invigorate local film enthusiasts. He has talked at meetings, to departmental officers, and on the radio. He has caused the trade papers rather shamefacedly to admit that documentary people aren't all professors and did a good deal to dispel a lot of the ballyhoo that has been talked about documentary film in this country.

There are other encouraging signs on the horizon as well. The Commonwealth Government, which has been dabbling in film production for over 10 years, has announced its interest in establishing an authority on similar lines to the Canadian pattern, but we have not a Grierson and with every month we are losing the force which helped Grierson so much in Canada—the urgent and common needs of war.

A word about film societies. There aren't very many and those that do exist seem to be primarily interested in showing the films to a limited number of people without any real intention of improving the aprpeciation of film or of spreading knowledge of the history, purpose and technique of good cinema. Nevertheless, the Imperial Relations Trust need not fear that its original grant was misspent. The N.S.W. Documentary Films Committee (headed by A. K. Stout, whom Edinburgh Film Society members might remember), now with only one projector that works, runs a regular circuit of showings in 30 country districts. The Canberra Film Centre hopes to issue a bulletin to encourage the growth of other groups and of the understanding of the ideals of the documentary film movement.

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The Film and Science

The letter which follows was sent to the Secretary of The London Scientific Film Society by Dr. Rickman, the psychiatrist. We reprint it because the points raised are of general interest.

DEAR BELL,

When filling in the Questionnaire at the L.S.F.S. film shows the time available is not sufficient for a developed presentation of the points raised in the mind by the film. I am therefore sending this note.

THE *Conquest of a Germ* film seemed to me to be imaginative and to hold the attention; it was an innovation in technique in dealing with a scientific subject and seemed to hold out great possibilities of development.

In the theatre in former ages the only people who were granted the function of soliloquy were the chief characters in the scene. Soliloquy gave them another dimension in mental movement and consequently an increase in relative stature; further it enabled them to play a more creative part in the development of the theme of the play. As a corollary of this the playwright had to decide to which of his characters he was going to accord this especial power or privilege of soliloquy —it must only be placed on a character "strong" enough to bear it.

Applying this criterion to the *Conquest of a Germ* film one asks—if the title is to be taken seriously—who is the chief character, *who* conquers the germ? It is clearly not the ruminating doctor because he goes to his friends in the labs. and gets from them a trial sample of prontosil. The conquerors are the lab. men and those who wrote the articles in the scientific journals which he only scans. And yet those men don't, if my memory serves, soliloquise: they should if the conquering of the germ is the important thing as the title suggests. Call the film, "Where can one find a Remedy?" and the details fall into place: a doctor worried because of an intractable illness in his patient—traditional remedies prove unavailing—he must break away! But where to? To his friends who have been working in experimental medicine, to the lab. men and libraries.

That I take is the message of the film. Medical education tells the doctor (and the film tells the public) in which direction to look for remedies, viz. to the persistent, undemonstrative, unemotional fields of science. The rumination then takes its proper place, the worried doctor asks himself, "To *whom* shall I turn?" the soliloquies are a technical device of the film to underline the simple human wish for help in a difficulty.

This brings me to another and more general question regarding scientific films and their societies. One of the characteristics of science is its endeavour to avoid the pitfalls of wishful thinking; another is that it, or rather scientists, endeavour to put questions regarding the way things work and to find the answer by examining, in detail, the way in which things behave in restricted and experimental fields. It is a question-putting and answer-finding aspect of human behaviour.

A scientist does not, for instance, as a scientist ask the question, "How can I help this patient who is suffering from puerperal fever?" but such a question as, "What chemical will inhibit or kill germs in an organism without harming the host?" Further, each step in the process of finding the answer to the question must be made available to the scrutiny of his fellow-men.

A film about science should therefore state its question and disclose some at least of the steps taken to find the answer; if there is no question put then the film is not scientific, it is technological.

A film is technological, as I interpret the word, if it records a *process* without stating the question the scientist had in mind when planning his experiment; a record of method may have high scientific interest, it is not itself a part of scientific development unless it is placed in a question-putting and answer-finding framework.

The L.S.F.S. shows technological films for the most part—not scientific ones; to say this is not to belittle its importance, but the distinction should be kept clearly in mind. The same picture could often be used for either a scientific purpose or a technological one, by giving each version a different commentary, i.e., the criterion lies not necessarily in the way the scenes have been assembled, but in the way the mind of the audience is led to look at the scenes. (Because the audience is composed partly of scientists, partly of laymen and there is no telling who is and who isn't in most cases apart from published work or personal knowledge—there is no reason to suppose that everyone present will put the appropriate, or indeed any, question when shown a technological film. In a man's own subject he might *guess* at the question; in some other field he might, though an intelligent fellow, go completely astray.)

This brings me to the subject of the approach which is perhaps desirable in scientific films. Taking a fifteen-minute film I should suggest the following kind of commentary:—

(*a*) An introduction, e.g., saying it's a biological film arising out of the work of X.Y.Z. (100 words) done in the A.B. Labs. (50 words), by Mr. So-and-so.

(*b*) *The special problem* ("questions") the film was designed to illustrate or solve, which is C. and D. (250 to 350 words).

(*c*) Note these points E.F.G. which seem to give the answers (250 to 350 words).

Say 650 words in all, say, 6 minutes of speaking, or less than half the length of a 15-min. film.

How should the commentary be put across effectively? If the person who planned the question and the answer can be present (I think of those admirable ruminations in public of Sir Joseph Barcroft at one of the Royal Society of Medicine film shows) he can stand before the screen and do his talk from there provided he is an experienced and film-minded lecturer. (A finger-wagging school-marm attitude distracts the attention and tends to make the audience ridicule the speaker if the subject-matter is unfamiliar.) Failing a "presence" and skill of authority, a commentary coming through the sound mechanism would seem to be best because it is the familiar route through which the audience receives its sound (I think of the well-timed and surely carefully rehearsed reading, in English over a public address system, of a commentary on a Russian tank film), but just because it is the familiar route for sound it must be of high technical competence. An audience hardly expects a lecturer to be "in sync.", but it does expect a commentary to be—and it has a right to this demand.

While on the subject of the Society's film shows, the inclusion in the programmes of films which might be called "Socio-technological", e.g., *New Builders* (1944), and *Housing in Scotland* (1944), is a welcome extension to a new field. The framing of the commentary in sociological films, however, is a delicate matter; it is not socially embarrassing and anxiety provoking to show films on the breaking of metal bars under tension, but to show the breaking of social bonds under tension is disturbing; some people feel that it is not a proper subject for study, or anyway not a proper subject for the films.

The warnings given to the audience, before a surgical operation film, are given because of the well known response to bodily interferenoes, and the public knows that a few people are likely to faint or be sick; the public is now beginning to overcome its horror of experiments in the anatomical field (dissection is now taught in schools); but it hardly realises its aversions in the social field, or does not realise that they are aversions. The time will come no doubt when scientific films in the field of sociology will be made and shown to general audiences. Till that time comes I hope the L.S.F.S. will continue to develop this side of its activities, and in particular, as a beginning, run those films which show how sociologists (or administrators inspired by sociologists) have tackled social problems.

The recent Office of War Information film on the Tennessee Valley Authority is good in itself in this line, but could be improved with a special commentary. It shows that the T.V.A. was not only a matter of physical engineering (turning a river on and off as by a tap) but a problem in *social engineering*. By social engineering I mean the ascertainment of the social forces and frictions operating in a social field, and the utilisation of those forces for greater productive power in the direction of human happiness and amenities than they now possess; social engineering also includes the means by which these forces can be canalised so that the social potential can be used and not wasted.

JOHN RICKMAN

SIGHT and SOUND

A cultural Quarterly

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

appraising educational and entertainment values

Published by: The British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

New Documentary Films

(*continued from p. 77*)

Children's Charter. *Production:* Crown Film Unit. *Director:* Gerry Bryant. *Camera:* Jonah Jones and Chic Fowle. M.O.I. 16 mins.
Subject: The consequences of the new Education Act.
Treatment: The effects of the new Act are seen largely in terms of the new or refurnished educational institutions which will be set up under its provisions. Thus the sequences include a village school and college at Impington, Cambridge, a farm school in Wales, a junior technical college in Essex and a day continuation school in Rugby. Shots of buildings and pupils are supplemented by sound and picture excerpts from the more colourful lessons which are taking the place of the pedagogics of the past. The film is unspectacular and indeed conventional in treatment, but camera-work direction and editing show smooth craftsmanship. The lesson excerpts fit neatly into the commentated sections and tell us something both about teacher and pupils.
Propaganda Value: Unobtrusive. This is a solid job of exposition which in the shortness of its footage avoids the need to probe into the technicalities of the new Act. The exploration of technicalities might have revealed the weaknesses of parts of the legislation. If the Government film agency of the future is to explain legislation by means of the film, a sound beginning has been made with this first example.

The Nine Hundred. Photographed by Combat Camera Units of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, R.A.F., and British Army Film Units. 20 mins.
Subject: The daylight rescue of 900 wounded men of a Yugo-Slav Army Corps cut off and surrounded by the Germans in the all-out offensive of summer, 1944.
Treatment: The filming of the actual rescue was carried out by one cameraman, Lieut. Francis Burgess, who flew with the transports from the Allied advance base on the Island of Vis off the Dalmatian Coast. In daylight for two hours they passed over the enemy lines deep into Yugoslavia. Awaiting them were the 900 whose evacuation would also liberate 3,000 stretcher bearers to fight again. The urgency of the undertaking is communicated to the audience. First an emergency strip must be prepared in the mountains—just a field of stubble: a boy runner is sent to make contact with an Allied signaller whose message is flashed to H.Q. somewhere in southern Italy. While we are waiting for the planes to arrive the camera studies the fine physique and stoically handsome faces of these men and girl soldiers (many of them have had limbs amputated without anaesthetics or antiseptics, sometimes without surgical instruments, using ice for knives). The children are suffering from malnutrition as well as shrapnel wounds; many have been born during the German occupation. The transports (manned by British, Americans and Russians) arrive with sorely needed arms, food and medical supplies, and the assembled 900 are methodically and rapidly packed in. Then back to a casualty clearing station in Italy. Some fine choral singing forms the background to the picture but I longed for peace and quiet to absorb the crisp informative commentary.
Propaganda Value: This film was well worth making as another page in the record book of heroic wartime co-operation.

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H: For hire. F: Free distribution. Sd: Sound. St: Silent.

Association of Scientific Workers, 30 Bedford Row, W.C.1. Scientific Film Committee. *Graded List of Films*. A list of scientific films from many sources, classified and graded for various types of audience. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F. & H.

Austin Film Library. Films of motoring, industrial, technical and travel interest. Available only from the *Educational Films Bureau*, Tring, Herts. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Australian Trade Publicity Film Library. 18 films of Australian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library of the Central Film Library*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

British Commercial Gas Association, Gas Industry House, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1. Films on social subjects, domestic science, manufacture of gas. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & a few St. F.

British Council Film Department, 3 Hanover Street, W.1. *Films of Britain*, 1943–44. Catalogue for overseas use only but provides useful synopses of many sound and silent documentary films.

British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. (*a*) *National Film Library Loan Section* to stimulate film appreciation by making available copies of film classics. 35 mm., 16 mm. Sd. & St. H. (*b*) *Collection of Educational Films*. A small collection of educational films not available from other sources. (*c*) The B.F.I. issues subject lists of films.

British Instructional Films, 111 Wardour Street, W.1. Feature films; Pathé Gazettes and Pathetones; a collection of early Percy Smith and other nature films. 16 mm. Sd. H.

Canadian–Pacific Film Library. 15 films of Canadian life and scenery. Available from the *Empire Film Library*, of the *Central Film Library*. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Canadian Government Exhibitions and Publicity. A wide variety of films. Available from the *Empire Film Library* of the *Central Film Library*.

Central Council for Health Education, Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, W.C.1. A list of some 250 films, dealing with Diphtheria, Housing, Maternity, Child Welfare, Personal Hygiene, Prevention of Diseases, Physical Fitness, etc. The C.C.H.E. also distributes six films of its own, free. 35 mm., & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H. & F.

Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Contains almost all M.O.I. theatrical and non-theatrical films, as well as films from the services and many other sources. Publishes main and supplementary catalogues, and lists of silent films. Also holds the Empire and G.P.O. film libraries for which separate catalogues are available. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Children's Committee of the National Council for British–Soviet Unity, 101 Abbey House, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1. Soviet Sound Films suitable for children. 16 mm. Sd. F. for shows during school hours. H. for other occasions.

Coal Utilisation Joint Council, General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C.2. Films on production of British coal and miners' welfare. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Crookes Laboratories, Gorst Road, Park Royal, N.W.10. A number of pharmaceutical films, including *Colloids in Medicine*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Dartington Hall Film Unit, Totnes, South Devon. Classroom films on regional and economic geography. 16 mm. St. H.

Dawn Trust Film Library, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Dominion of New Zealand Film Library, 415 Strand, W.C.2. Films of industry, scenery and sport. Includes several films about the Maoris. 16 mm. St. F.

Educational Films Bureau, Tring, Herts. A selection of all types of film. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Educational and General Services, Tower House, Woodchester, near Stroud, Gloucestershire. A wide selection of films, particularly of overseas interest. Some prints for sale. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Electrical Development Association, 2 Savoy Hill, Strand, W.C.2. Four films of electrical interest. 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Empire Film Library. Films primarily of Empire interest, with a useful subject index. See *Central Film Library*. 16 mm. & a few 35 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Filmhire (London) Ltd., 9 Upper Berkeley Street, W.1. A miscellaneous list. 16 mm. Sd. H.

Ford Film Library, Dagenham, Essex. Some 50 films of travel, engineering, scientific and comedy interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Gaumont British Instructional, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1. Many films on scientific subjects, geography, hygiene, history, language, natural history, sport. 35 mm.& 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Gebescope Film Library, Woodchester, near Stroud, Gloucestershire. Entertainment feature and short films, including the *Secrets of Life* series with humorous commentaries. 16 mm. Sd.

G.P.O. Film Library. Over 100 films, mostly centred round communications. See *Central Film Library*. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Guide to Documentary Films on Medical Subjects. Available from the British Medical Students Association, B.M.A. House, Tavistock Square, W.C.1. Price 1*s*. A list of titles, distributors, etc., under subject headings. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H. & F.

Holborn Film Library. See Workers' Film Association.

Instructional Screen Ltd., 9 Upper Berkeley Street, W.1. A series of films mainly of popular historical and architectural interest. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

J.K. Film Service, 125 London Road, Camberley, Surrey.

Kodak Medical Film Library, Kingsway, W.C.2. Circulation restricted to members of medical profession. Some colour films. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. St. H.

March of Time, Dean House, 4 Dean Street, W.1. Selected *March of Time* issues. 16 mm. Sd. H.

Mathematical Films. Available from B. G. D. Salt, 5 Carlingford Road, Hampstead, N.W.3. Five mathematical films suitable for senior classes. 16 mm. & 9.5. mm. St. H.

Office of War Information, American Embassy, 1 Grosvenor Square, W.1. A list of U.S. documentary films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Pathescope, North Circular Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2. Wide selection of silent films, including cartoons, comedies, drama, documentary, travel, sport. Also good selection of early American and German films. 9·5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Petroleum Films Bureau, 15 Hay Hill, Berkeley Square. W.1. Some 25 technical and documentary films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

R. W. Proffitt Ltd., 49–51 Knowsley Street, Bolton, Lancashire. A mixed collection of feature and short films. 16 mm. St. H.

Religious Film Library, Church Walk, Dunstable, Beds. Films of religious and temperance appeal. Also list of supporting films from other sources. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Review of Horticultural Films, A. Available from J. Hardy, N.D.H., Cannon Croft, Eastcote Road, Pinner, Middlesex. A composite list of films from many sources.

Ron Harris, 63–5 King Street, Maidenhead, Berks. A mixed collection of feature and short films.

Scientific Film Association, The, c/o The Royal Photographic Society, 16 Princes Gate, S.W.7. Lists of new films are issued periodically to members. A catalogue is in preparation.

Scottish Central Film Library, 2 Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow, C.3. A wide selection of teaching films from many sources. Contains some silent Scots films not listed elsewhere, and a number of prints from the Kodak library, closed in 1940. Films available in Scotland only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

South African Railways Publicity and Travel Bureau, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, W.C.2. Films of travel and general interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & 4 St. versions. F.

Southern Railway, General Manager's Office, Waterloo Station, S.E.1. Seven films (one in colour) including *Building an Electric Coach*, *South African Fruit* (Southampton Docks to Covent Garden,) and films on seaside towns. 16 mm. St. F.

Soviet Films in Britain, the Soviet Film Agency, The Soviet Embassy, 13 Kensington Palace Gardens, W.8. A composite list of sound films, including a number of well-known feature films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. H. & F.

Wallace Heaton Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1. Three catalogues. Sound 16 mm., silent 16 mm., silent 9·5 mm. Sound catalogue contains number of American feature films, including *Thunder Over Mexico*, and some shorts. Silent 16 mm. catalogue contains first-class list of early American, German and Russian features and shorts. 9·5 catalogue has number of early German films and wide selection of early American and English slapstick comedies. 16 mm. & 9·5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Workers' Film Association Ltd., Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1. A miscellaneous collection of films, including some of Democratic, Co-operative and International interest. The W.F.A. has recently acquired many of the films formerly held by the Holborn Film Library. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.